

SUNDAY PLUS

The promise of hope

Expectancy and hope

By Michael George

Advent is a time of expectancy and hope. This is a busy time in schools. There are nativity plays and carol services, decorations, making of cards, exchanging of gifts, Christmas lunches and visits – visits to the crib and visits from Father Christmas. It is a joyful time.

Expectancy, hope and joy resound through today's readings. "Shout for joy" exhort both the first reading and the psalm, and "Be happy" instructs the second reading: the time of Christmas will soon be upon us. In the Gospel, John brought authority and as a result expectancy built among the people. But he was not the Christ: Christ was still to come.

Last Advent I accompanied pupils who had been invited to sing carols in a local care home. When a teacher asked the residents whether any of

them had any requests that the children could sing, one lady, who had been joining in enthusiastically with the children singing, shouted out, "Any! I just love Christmas!" She was indeed singing and shouting for joy, albeit several days before Christmas itself.

It is a privilege that I can help children share Advent and Christmas joy with others. It is the nature of the school calendar that Christmas joy is anticipated: schools break for the holidays several days before Christmas. Yet that joy can be anticipated with certainty because of God's promise of hope, shared by John the Baptist. God will always be true to his promises. The celebration of the Nativity will soon be here.

Michael George has worked in Catholic schools in the south of England for 25 years, as teacher, headteacher and chaplain.

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Experience joy

By Linda Jones

The Gospel is good news. There is hope. Today we hear how the crowds are full of excitement and expectation. Perhaps something in their lives will change. Someone special is coming.

Just before Christmas we can feel overwhelmed. Sometimes we get really worried about living up to some ideal event, with perfect food and a few days without family arguments. But deep down we know this is unrealistic. We

are human after all. We make mistakes, get grumpy and tired, and forget stuff. That's just normal.

But the worst thing about all the worry is that it can lead us to miss out on the joy. The worst thing about the fear is that we miss out on the hope. Can we share the joy and the hope at this time of year? One of the best ways to fully experience joy is to share it with others. How could you do that?

Linda Jones is Head of the CAFOD Theology Programme and a regular contributor to Redemptorist Publications.

May the grace of the Jubilee awaken in us, Pilgrims of Hope, a yearning for the treasures of heaven. May that same grace spread the joy and peace of our Redeemer throughout the earth.

To you our God, eternally blessed, be glory and praise for ever. ✚ Amen.

The Jubilee Prayer

Jubilee 2025:
Pilgrims of Hope



What is the Jubilee?

The Jubilee has always been an event of great spiritual, ecclesial, and social significance in the life of the Church. Ever since 1300, when Boniface VIII instituted the first Holy Year – initially celebrated every hundred years, then, following its biblical precedent, every fifty years, and finally every twenty-five years – God's holy and faithful people have experienced this celebration as a special gift of grace, characterised by the forgiveness of sins and, in particular, by the indulgence, which is a full expression of the mercy of God. The faithful, frequently at the conclusion of a lengthy pilgrimage, draw from the spiritual treasury of the Church by passing through the Holy Door and venerating the relics of the Apostles Peter and Paul preserved in Roman basilicas. Down the centuries, millions upon millions of pilgrims have journeyed to these sacred places, bearing living witness to the faith professed in every age.

Pope Francis

Today:
Zephaniah 3:14-18
Philippians 4:4-7
Luke 3:10-18

Monday:
Numbers 24:2-7. 15-17
Matthew 21: 23-27

Tuesday:
Genesis 49: 2, 8-10
Matthew 1: 1-17

Wednesday:
Jeremiah 23: 5-8
Matthew 1: 18-25

Thursday:
Judges 13: 2-7. 24-25
Luke 1:5-25

Friday:
Isaiah 7: 10-14
Luke 1:26-38

Saturday:
Song of Songs 2: 8-14
Luke 1:39-45

Next Sunday:
Micah 5:1-4
Hebrews 10:5-10
Luke 1:39-45